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**U.S. CONVICTS TWO FOR
NARCOTICS CONSPIRACY AND NARCOTICS-RELATED ABDUCTION**

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that CHRISTOPHER ROMERO, a/k/a "CR," and VINCENT FERRERIO, were convicted by a jury yesterday for crimes relating to ROMERO's running of a narcotics distribution business and to ROMERO's and FERRERIO's abduction of a young woman as part of a plan to extort narcotics and narcotics-related property.

According to court documents and the evidence presented at trial, beginning in at least October 2002, CHRISTOPHER ROMERO ran a complex operation which distributed substantial amounts of crystal methamphetamine, cocaine, and other narcotics throughout New York City. ROMERO maintained a list of approved narcotics customers, as well as each customer's address and contact information, on a laptop computer. Customers would place narcotics orders by calling certain designated cellular telephones owned by ROMERO. ROMERO or one of his workers would answer each call and then verify that the caller was an approved

customer by consulting ROMERO's computerized customer list. If the caller was approved, his or her order would be taken and one of ROMERO's workers would be sent to deliver the narcotics to the customer.

According to the evidence presented at trial, in or about December 2004, ROMERO began serving a sentence for a New York State misdemeanor conviction. Before he reported to prison, however, ROMERO gave his laptop computer with the customer list, his supply of crystal methamphetamine and other narcotics, and his cellular telephones to one of his co-conspirators (the "CC") so that the CC could continue running ROMERO's narcotics business while ROMERO was in prison. As a result, ROMERO's drug operation continued to function during his absence.

According to evidence presented at trial, however, while ROMERO was in prison, the CC decided to take control of ROMERO's drug business. The CC continued to sell ROMERO's drugs to ROMERO's customers, but instead of surrendering the proceeds for delivery to ROMERO's mother as ROMERO instructed, the CC kept the money for himself.

According to the evidence presented at trial, on or about February 14, 2005, after ROMERO had been released from prison, ROMERO and his associates abducted a young woman who was the CC's girlfriend (the "Victim") in an effort to force the CC to return ROMERO's narcotics and narcotics-related property. Over the next day and a half, ROMERO kept the Victim in VINCENT FERRERIO's apartment in Manhattan. ROMERO, FERRERIO, and others

took turns guarding the Victim so that she could not escape. While the Victim was being held hostage, ROMERO and one of his associates repeatedly made calls to the CC and another person threatening to harm the Victim if ROMERO's narcotics property was not promptly returned. At one point, the Victim herself was allowed to place a call to plead for help.

According to the evidence presented at trial, while being held hostage, the Victim was subjected to verbal threats and was, at times, handcuffed inside FERRERIO's apartment. ROMERO also threatened the Victim with a hot iron. Furthermore, at one point during the Victim's ordeal, while left alone with VINCENT FERRERIO, FERRERIO sexually assaulted the Victim.

The trial of ROMERO and FERRERIO began on July 5, 2005 before United States District Judge WILLIAM H. PAULEY III and ended the afternoon of July 14, 2005, when the jury convicted ROMERO and FERRERIO on the two counts with which they were both charged, i.e., one count of conspiring to commit Hobbs Act extortion and one count of committing Hobbs Act extortion. The jury also convicted ROMERO on the third count of the Indictment, which charged ROMERO with conspiring to distribute, and to possess with intent to distribute, 50 grams and more of crystal methamphetamine as well as a quantity of cocaine. CHRISTOPHER ROMERO and VINCENT FERRERIO each face a maximum term of forty years' imprisonment for the Hobbs Act related charges. In

addition, CHRISTOPHER ROMERO faces a maximum term of life imprisonment and a mandatory minimum term of ten years' imprisonment for the narcotics conspiracy charge.

Mr. KELLEY praised the Drug Enforcement Administration and the New York City Police Department for their response to, and investigation of, this matter.

Assistant United States Attorneys JOHN O'DONNELL and LAURIE KORENBAUM are in charge of the prosecution.

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